

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 and 12-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ryosuke (JP 2000-306226) in view of Chang et al. (US 6,937,439). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection because, even if combined, the cited references still would not disclose or suggest the claimed pads as described in the claims.

More specifically, independent claims 1 and 12 describe that at least the pads formed on the front rail have an inclined upper end surface extending from the first height to the second height. The upstream end of the inclined upper end surface is higher in level than the downstream end.

The Examiner properly acknowledges that Ryosuke does not disclose the claimed pads of the present invention. The Chang et al. reference relates to a slider including a leading air bearing region 302 disposed at the leading or upstream edge of the slider. A number of insular regions 306 are formed along the side edge of the slider, in the perpendicular direction to the air bearing region 302 (see Fig. 3a). The Chang et al. reference teaches that the surface of the leading air bearing region 302 and the insular regions 306 combine to collectively form a radius of curvature 312 extending from the leading edge to the trailing edge (see Fig. 3B and col. 5, lines 57-59). To form the radius of curvature 312, Chang et al. teaches that the surface of the air bearing region 302 and the surface of the first insular region 306 near the leading edge of the slider have an angle such that the upstream, or the leading, end of the surface is lower than the downstream side, as clearly shown in Figs. 3A and 3B.

Since the Chang et al. reference teaches forming air bearing surfaces which are lower at the upstream end than the downstream end, the suggested combination would result in the pads of Ryosuke that are formed on the front rail also having an inclined surface that is lower at the upstream and than the downstream end. In contrast, the claimed pads of the present invention that are formed on the front rail have inclined surface which is higher at the upstream end than the downstream end. This feature of the present invention, therefore, would not be disclosed even if the cited references were combined. For this reason, claims 1-3 and 12 are allowable over the cited references.

For the all reasons given above, the present invention is now believed to be allowable, which is respectfully requested. The Examiner should contact Applicants' undersigned attorney if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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